



**WHERE ABILITY
MEETS OPPORTUNITY**

DISABILITY ETIQUETTE



Background

- More than 56.7 Million Americans have a disability
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 - goal of integrating people with disabilities into all aspects of American life, especially the workplace (Title I)
- Businesses' sensitivity to folks with disabilities can:
 - help them expand their practice
 - better serve their customers
 - develop an audience
- It helps patrons
 - Feel welcome
 - Feel more comfortable
 - Work more productively



“ The most important part of interacting with someone who has a disability is seeing that person for whom he, she or they are, not what disability the person has.”

-Disability Etiquette: How to Respect People with Disabilities

Disability Sensitivity Training Video



[Disability Sensitivity Training Video](#)

The Basics



ASK BEFORE YOU
HELP



BE SENSITIVE ABOUT
PHYSICAL CONTACT



THINK BEFORE YOU
SPEAK



RESPOND
GRACIOUSLY TO
REQUESTS



DON'T MAKE
ASSUMPTIONS



PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES ARE
INDIVIDUALS

Language Tips



Put the person first

“person with _____”

Avoid general categories groups and use the individual’s preferred pronouns “he,” “she,” or “they,” unless otherwise directed



Avoid outdated terms

Hearing-impaired, handicapped, etc.



Be aware of negative or disempowering words

i.e. saying “wheelchair-bound” when really it is a liberating tool, not a confining one

Avoid using the word “victim” as it takes away the person’s power, strength and ability to overcome



Idiomatic expressions are ok

It is not offensive to say, “Good to see you!” to someone who is blind



Know disability-specific info for the folks you interact with most

Educate yourself or just ask the individual!

People Who Use Wheelchairs or Have Mobility Impairments



Don't touch a person's wheelchair unless he or she asks for your assistance and, even then, wait for clear instructions



Keep ramps and accessible doors unblocked and unlocked



Be aware of the wheelchair-users reach limits



Sit at their level when having a conversation; step around counters or other obstacles that impede interactions

People Who are Blind or Visually Impaired



Identify yourself before making physical contact



Offer a tour at a new location



Offer your arm for guidance; give specific, nonvisual info when identifying obstacles or potential hazards



Walk on the opposite side as a guide dog



Offer to read written information; offer large, clear print materials



Check in about lighting, seating placement, and other environmental considerations

People With Low Vision



Ask if they need written material in large print



Use a clear font with appropriate spacing, avoid using italics and all uppercase letters



Labels and signs should be clearly lettered in contrasting colors



Keep walkways clear of obstructions



Good lighting is important, but shouldn't be too bright

- Qualified readers
- Taped texts
- Audio recordings
- Brailed materials and displays
- Screen reader software
- Magnification software
- Optical readers
- Secondary auditory programs (SAP)
- Large print materials
- Accessible electronic and information technology
- Other effective methods of making visually delivered materials available to individuals who are blind or have low vision

Auxiliary Aids and Services

ACTIVITY



In groups of 2 or 3, discuss how you would give directions to your office to a consumer who is blind or has low vision

- Include details such as color, texture, shape and landmarks
- Remember “here” and “there” alone are meaningless to someone with severe vision loss

People Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing



Follow the person's cues as to their preferred method of communication (ASL, gesturing, writing, or speaking)



For especially complex info, utilize an interpreter



Look directly at the person who is Deaf and maintain eye contact. Talk directly to the person rather than to the interpreter



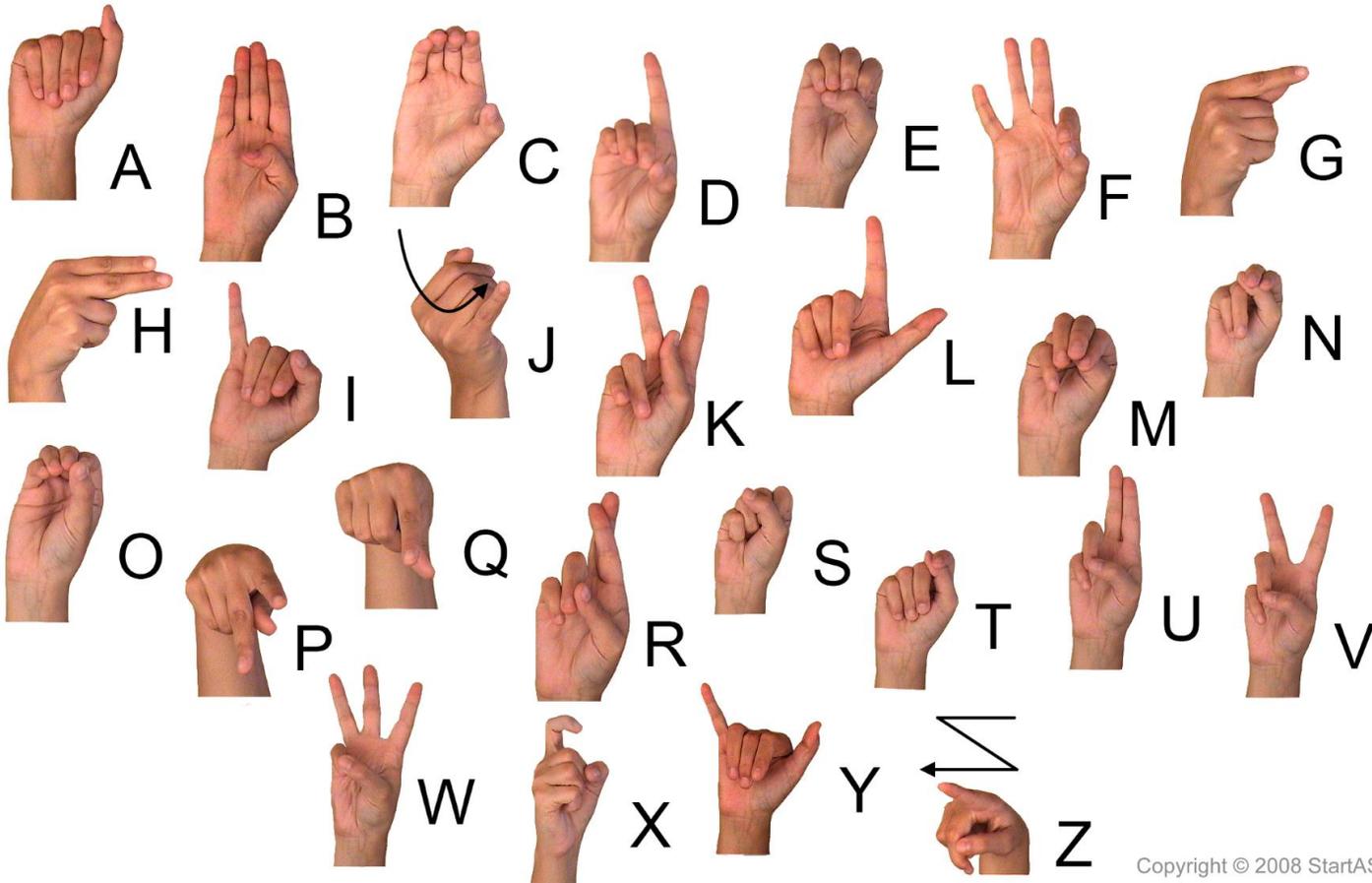
Face the person when talking; be aware of lighting and other sounds



Speak clearly and don't shout

- Qualified interpreters on-site or through video remote interpreting (VRI) services
- Notetakers
- Real-time computer-aided transcription services
- Written materials; exchange of written notes
- Telephone handset amplifiers
- Assistive listening devices and systems
- Telephones compatible with hearing aids
- Closed caption decoders
- Open and closed captioning, including real-time captioning
- Voice, text, and video-based telecommunications products and systems, including text telephones (TTYs), videophones, and captioned telephones, or equally effective telecommunications devices
- Videotext displays
- Accessible electronic and information technology
- Other effective methods of making aurally delivered information available to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing

Auxiliary Aids and Services



AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL) ALPHABET

People With Speech Disabilities



Give your full attention, don't interrupt or finish the person's sentences



If you have trouble understanding, ask them to repeat it



If you're still unable to understand the person, ask them to write it down or suggest another way of communicating



Face the person when talking; try to find a quiet environment for communicating

People with Developmental Disabilities



Speak in clear sentences, using simple and concrete words – rather than abstract – concepts, never talk down to or use baby talk



They might be anxious to please and tell you what they think you want to hear. Phrase questions in a neutral way to elicit accurate information and repeat back in a different way to confirm



Remember that the person is an adult and, unless you are informed otherwise, can make their own decisions



Clear signage with pictograms can help a person with developmental disabilities find their way around



Routine and the familiar is a way to manage work and daily living, a change in the environment or a routine may require some attention and a period of adjustment

People with Learning Disabilities



People with dyslexia or other reading disabilities have trouble reading written information, provide verbal explanations and allow extra time for reading



A person with auditory processing disorder may need information demonstrated or in writing



Be direct in your communication, ask the person how you can best relay information



Be aware of your environment, some may need a quiet environment free from distractions

People with Psychiatric Disabilities or Mental Illness



Stress can affect the person's ability to function, keep the pressure of a situation to a minimum



People who have psychiatric disabilities have varying personalities and different ways of coping. Treat them as individuals and ask what they are most comfortable with



In a crisis, stay calm and be supportive, ask how you can help, if a support person can be sent for and if appropriate ask if there is medication they need to take

People With Hidden Disabilities



Stress can affect the person's ability to function, keep the pressure of a situation to a minimum



Treat each person as an individual and ask what will make them most comfortable



Adapt to a person's request, verbal directions may not work for someone and they'll ask you write them down



Stay calm and supportive in a crisis, ask how you can help and find out if there is a support person who can be sent for

People With Traumatic (or Acquired) Brain Injury



A person with a brain injury may have poor impulse control, they may make inappropriate comments and may not understand social cues



Poor short-term memory or directional orientation may make someone unable to follow directions, they may ask to be accompanied or use a guide dog



Ask if the person understands you and if they would like you to write down what you are saying



They may have trouble concentrating or organizing thoughts in an over-stimulated environment, be patient or suggest going somewhere with fewer distractions

Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) or Respiratory Disabilities



Avoid using spray products that go into the air, if they are necessary, pour or spray onto a cloth and use less-toxic products



Workplace culture to not use, or go easy on fragranced body-care products



Maintain good ventilation and indoor air quality



Follow and enforce no-smoking regulations in buildings and around the entrance

Autism



Autistic people communicate in different ways, from spoken words to typing, gestures and sounds. Allow sufficient processing time



Do not insist on eye contact, it can be distracting or uncomfortable and even threatening to many autistic people



Do not expect an autistic person to read nonverbal communication. When necessary, be clear and direct



Minimize non-essential sensory input to create safer sensory environments and facilitate autistic communication

Persons of Short Stature



Have necessary items within the person's reach to the maximum extent possible



Be sensitive about not using lower communal items if they are in limited supply



Communication is easier when people are at the same level, ask their preference and follow their cues

People with Cerebral Palsy (CP)



Slurred Speech and involuntary body movements are common for people with CP, interact with them as you would anyone else



Get the facts prior to acting on your first impression, someone with CP may appear drunk, sick or that they are having a medical emergency

People who use Service Animals



Do not touch the service animal
without permission



A person and their service animal
must be allowed to enter barring a
direct threat to health and safety

Other Considerations

- Not all disabilities are apparent; respect a person's needs and requests whenever possible
- Respect the privacy of a person with a disability. Allow them to discuss their situation if and when they feel comfortable doing so
- Have well-prepared Emergency Evacuation Procedures for people who might need help during an emergency
- Don't make decisions for people with disabilities about what they can and cannot do
- When in doubt, Ask!

Signage



WHEELCHAIR ACCESS



ASSISTIVE LISTENING
FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE
A HEARING LOSS



SIGN-LANGUAGE
INTERPRETER



TTY/TDD
(TEXT TELEPHONE)

Emergency Evacuation Procedures for People with Disabilities

- Compile a voluntary list of people with disabilities who are regulars at your facility, such as employees, clients and guests
- Interview each individual on the list to plan the most effective way to assist them in case of an emergency
- Develop a plan, including a voluntary sign-in, for an emergency that may affect people who are not attached to the facility
- Practice the evacuation procedures and keep your plans up to date

Information Accessibility

- Utilize an accessibility expert, when possible
- Many programs (such as PowerPoint) have their own “Check for Issues” mechanism that will identify potential barriers in documents and presentations for people with disabilities
- Ask participants ahead of time to let you know of accommodations that might be needed
- Send agenda and materials prior to meetings and trainings so individuals can plan, advocate, and prepare



[Disability and Work: Let's Stop Wasting Talent | Hannah Barham-Brown | TEDxExeter](#)



Videos



[I'm Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much | Stella Young | TEDTalks](#)



Videos



[Our Fight for Disability Rights and Why We're Not Done Yet | Judith Heumann | TEDxMidAtlantic](#)



Videos



[Changing the Way We Talk About Disability | Amy Oulton | TEDxBrighton](#)



Videos

1. <http://www.unitedspinal.org/disability-etiquette>
2. <https://ada.osu.edu/designguidance/disability%20etiquette.pdf>
3. <https://www.diversityinc.com/diversity-leaders-6-things-never-to-say-about-disabilities>
4. <https://adata.org/faq/what-kinds-auxiliary-aids-and-services-are-required-ada-ensure-effective-communication>
5. <http://nda.ie/Good-practice/Guidelines/Procurement-and-Accessibility/Appendix-1-Making-information-accessible/>
6. <https://www.respectability.org/inclusion-toolkits/etiquette-interacting-with-people-with-disabilities/>

References
